POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 122 · Number 3 · Fall 2007

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by the desire to preserve the status quo or to strengthen the governing group rather than to empower rebellious groups, in which case, it would not have the potential to trigger interstate crisis. The book also does not address the difficulty of unleashing interveners' motives without making some assumptions about how ethnicity and political institutions shape leaders' incentives. Besides, there is the unexplored possibility of a two-way relationship between ethnic conflict and interstate ethnic crisis in which the latter might encourage ethnic groups to rebel against their government. Despite some minor drawbacks, *Who Intervenes* is an important work that explores an unbeaten path and enlightens the reader about the elusive link between ethnic conflicts and interstate ethnic crises.

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State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III *by Bob Woodward. New York, Simon & Schuster, 2006. 576 pp. $30.00.*

This book is the third volume in the series, "Bush at War," tracing the trajectory of the decision to remove Saddam Hussein from power and its aftermath. In some ways, it is the least interesting of the three. In the first book, *Bush at War*, there was a riveting story line and revealing insights regarding the new President, buttressed by national security minutes and interviews with all the principles, especially the President, on the lead-up to the war. The second installment, *Plan of Attack*, took readers behind the scenes of some of the debates and actual military and political planning that preceded and coincided with the onset of hostilities.

State of Denial is a tendentious title for a questionable narrative assertion. Clinically, the term "denial" refers to reality that is unseen because it is repressed before it can be addressed. This is quite different from a reality whose implications are not fully realized because when the "noise-to-signal issues" ratio is high, and the reality elements are embedded in a miasmic plethora of discordant information, they are hard to discern. It also differs from legitimate policy disagreements about what these information elements mean and how to address them. Neither of these constitutes denial in either the clinical or political sense.

The aftermath of the invasion is a complicated story that Bob Woodward feels can be understood according to three "tragic errors": disbanding the Iraqi Army, getting rid of 50,000 senior Baath Party members in the government, and sending home an interim Iraqi governing council. As anyone who has paid the slightest attention knows, these decisions were matters of heated debate, with many elements considered, not "denial," which leads, of course, to the absence of debate.

The United States did not "disband" the Iraqi Army so much as fail to immediately reconstitute it when most of its troops simply took off their uniforms

and went home after the invasion. Nor would reconstituting the Iraqi Army have been an easy way to avoid the difficulties we now face in Iraq. What evidence is there for that? Simple. That has been U.S. policy since the lethality of the insurgency was recognized, and the army seized on that plan to extricate American forces as quickly as possible. As we have learned, blending Iraqis into an effective national army has proven to be a very difficult and time-consuming process. We are still years away from its conclusion, if we stay to finish that task.

So too, the debate about what to do about former Baath party members was intense. No one advocated removing local schoolteachers who had joined the party to keep their job. However, it was clear that you could not leave the top layers of the party in power. That would be akin to letting former Nazis run the German government during the American occupation after WWII. The real debate was how far down in the ranks to go and the methodology by which cases would be decided. Reasonable people disagreed about both, but again this was a not a case of "denial."

And finally, there was the error, according to Woodward, of disbanding the interim Iraqi governing council. This was the group that General Jay Gardner put into power as the Iraqi face of the American occupation. They were disbanded by General Gardner's replacement, Jerry Bremer, who in turn installed his own hand-picked Iraqi group—which included, as it happened, many from the original interim council. Why this was a critical mistake is unclear, since neither group enjoyed much national legitimacy. President George W. Bush clearly saw these handpicked groups as transitional, since he had decided before the war not to place exile groups in power—a stance favored by the Pentagon—and to opt instead for real Iraqi elections.

Then there is the issue of troop numbers that Woodward, oddly, does not count among the three "tragic" mistakes. There was much debate also about this decision. More troops would have meant a larger American footprint and would have risked nationalist resentment; a smaller footprint left the occupational forces spread thin, and the insurgency lethally and effectively exploited this gap.

Here we come to the real linchpin decision of the war. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the generals wanted the military equivalent of a one-night stand. However, the President's political plans called for the development and emergence of a democratic Iraq. This clearly was going to take time and effort. What did Bush, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other interested parties have to say about this core dilemma, if anything? Did they count on the Iraqi Army to hold together? Did they underestimate the traumatization of Saddam's brutality on the institutions and people of Iraq? How did they think Sunni–Shiite tensions would be managed after years in which the Sunni minority, ruling through Saddam, had brutalized the majority Shiites?

In truth, we do not yet know the answers to these important questions, but they should be asked of every major principal involved. It is already becoming clear, although very slowly, that quickly formed conventional wisdom was, in important respects, wrong or premature. For example, it now turns out that rather than a lack of plans for post-war Iraq, there were in fact many plans. The problem seems to have been that one was not settled on and seriously implemented. So, too, criticisms of rosy scenarios have been confounded with presidential and administration optimism that goals could be accomplished. The differences between the two are to be found in the frank assessment of risk. Conventional wisdom on this and many other subjects assumed that the case was a "slam dunk," but just how frank those assessments were remains to be determined.

In George Tenant's new book, *At the Center of the Storm* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), he has written that "there was never a serious debate that I know of within the administration about the imminence of the Iraqi threat, [nor] was there ever a significant discussion" about the possibility of containing Iraq without an invasion. Yet in an 11 February 2007 *Fox News* interview, the much-maligned Rumsfeld aide Douglass Feith was pressed on exactly that issue:

> Chris Wallace: One final question. You say that this was all an effort at good government and, you know, that it's important to challenge the conclusions of the intelligence community. In all of your effort of good government, all your effort at challenging, did you ever make the case against going to war? Did you ever make the case that Saddam Hussein was not a threat?
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> Feith: Yes, absolutely, and in writing and I'm … the answer to your question emphatically is yes, and in writing, and it's been written about in many books. We put together, in fact, all of the considerations for not going to war. Secretary Rumsfeld did that. It was a memo that he worked on over a long period of time.

Hindsight bias is very powerful in circumstances in which judgments prove costly in lives; escalating partisan rhetoric reflects both worldviews and political calculations; and blame placement and avoidance are powerful motivating forces. These are the circumstances in which this country now finds itself as a result of the strategically induced carnage in Iraq. It is a difficult time at which to sort though the complexities of how we arrived at this point.

State of Denial gives us a detailed picture of what went wrong in Iraq from the standpoint of those who opposed the war in the first place. Colin Powell and Richard Armitage are principle sources in this book, and it is the latter who provides the mischaracterization of the President that is the title of the book. Also, much is heard from those who now want to distance themselves from what they see as a failed effort. As a result, the book reads throughout like the political equivalent of a daytime soap opera; we learn of the fears, complaints, rivalries, feuds, and jealousies of the chief players. Yet, regretfully, we learn much less about their policy views or, importantly, the substantive foundation underlying them.

This will be the important role of future, more-dispassionate analyses with access to the records of the Bush White House. In the meantime, Woodward's work will remain an important, if flawed, starting point for laying out what now has become "conventional wisdom."

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The America that Reagan Built *by J. David Woodard. Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 2006. 296 pp. $49.95.*

Richard Reeves's *President Reagan:The Triumph of Imagination* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005) depicts a former reporter as impressed, yet bewildered, by the elaborate pomp of Ronald Reagan's 2004 state funeral: "The man they're talking about is not the President I covered every day." J. David Woodard suggests that in fact he was. Reagan "not only changed the country, he changed the world," Woodard argues (p. 101), both as republican and Republican. His "rhetoric and character" re-energized America's founding ideals (p. 101); and in partisan terms, "the 1980 election began a rolling political realignment that changed the country from Democratic domination to Republican rule" (p. 248).

Woodard's goal is to recount America's political, social, and cultural history from "malaise" in 1979 to maelstrom in 2005. The impressively coherent narrative encompasses everything from elections and policy debates to trials of the century, hairstyles, and top television shows. If the story of the mid-1990s gives more space to O.J. Simpson than to health care reform, that, alas, is probably accurate enough, though the ambitious scope of the book ensures occasional factual errors; for example, Bill Clinton did not himself appoint Ken Starr as independent counsel (p. 191).

Certainly Woodard's judgment calls tend to favor Republican personalities and causes; this is history written by the victors, as he sees them. The portrait of Reagan himself is not starry-eyed, but his successors get less-balanced treatment. It is surely unfair, for instance, to charge Clinton with ignoring terrorism—"safety was in decline," Woodard intones (p. 199)—while excusing the September 11 attacks themselves by concluding that "the enemy had no strong organization, weapons, or money. At least that is what the president was told" (p. 214). More generally, Woodard sees Democrats as "led by a cultural elite that wanted to forget American ideals" (p. 249), and as postmodern skeptics of "the old order of rationalism, with its faith in science and unitary view of truth" (p. 240). The Republican Party in turn is modern, "comfortable with science and technology, and reliant on a heavenly foundation" (p. 240). These generalizations float over nuance—such as what drives some of those most reliant on a heavenly foundation to reject science (stem-cell research, evolution, on-site diagnosis of Terri Schiavo) and others to move their faith